

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 003923

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
ROBERT PALLADINO
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S PLAN TO CHANGE NAMES

A) "Taiwan's Name Change Campaign and U.S. Responses"

Lin Cheng-yi, Research Fellow and Director of the Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University, said in a commentary in the pro-status quo "China Times" (12/9):

"During the Cold War period, the United States and Taiwan shared the same military strategy of blocking Communist China. Nevertheless, both President Eisenhower and President Kennedy were against Chiang Kai-shek's plan to retake the Chinese mainland. In 1962, representatives of Kennedy and Mao Zedong met in Warsaw and reached a consensus to jointly oppose Chiang's proposed attack on Mainland China. Now, more than 10 years after the end of the Cold War, Taiwan's democratization has gradually moved from a bargaining chip to a potential problem. After Taipei pitched the ideas of 'Special State-to-state Relations,' 'One Side, One Country,' and 'defensive referendum,' the United States has come to realize that in addition to China, Taiwan is poised to become a source of instability in U.S.-China-Taiwan relations. Washington even feels the urge to pressure Taipei before pushing Beijing.

"The democratic developments in Taiwan after President Lee Teng-hui's rule put the United States in a dilemma, prompting Washington to narrow down the scope of the application of universal democratic values. In response to Taiwan's referendum plans, the Bush administration appeared unprepared and sent inconsistent messages. At one point, the United States said it didn't oppose the holding of referenda, later it said the United States didn't see any special need for referenda, and finally it stated its opposition to any unilateral change to the status quo. In the wake of such a difficult situation, the Bush administration stated, immediately after Taiwan concluded its 'defensive referendum' and well before it initiates constitutional reforms, that U.S. support is limited and it wouldn't be vague about the issue and would only make straightforward comments, otherwise, no one would profit.

"While the Bush Administration opposes unilateral moves by either side of the Taiwan Strait to change the status quo, it is reluctant to explain explicitly what is the so-called 'status quo' of the Taiwan Strait and what is the 'red line,' despite the fact that it wants to maintain the right to define these terms. The United States has increased its use of the terms status quo, red line, and red areas, but has never cited solid examples. Recently, the U.S. Department of State surprised many by saying that changes to the terminology for Taiwan's state-owned companies or economic and cultural offices abroad would unilaterally change Taiwan's status quo and are steps the United States would not support.

"The Bush administration interfered in Taiwan's internal affairs with its rapid and clear statement of not supporting Taiwan's name rectification campaign before the island kicks off its constitutional reforms. Yet the move serves as an early warning from the United States. The United States, involved in the global war on terror, reconstruction in Iraq, and nuclear developments in North Korea and Iraq, is unlikely to freeze democratic developments in Taiwan. It can only urge Taipei to restrain itself and hopes for no [untoward] event in the Taiwan Strait. The Bush administration is counting on official written promises by the Taipei leader as criteria for reviewing and judging [his actions].

"Beijing's strong opposition to the terms of 'Taiwan,' 'national,' and 'central' has directly and indirectly led to Taiwan's appeal for name rectification. Taiwan's name rectification campaign points to the establishment of the Taiwan identity and consensus and implies an independent Taiwan sovereignty. The campaign is expected to confront difficulties both internally and externally. If a sports event is

organized by the private sector, and the institution requiring a name change is a private company and the event is limited to Taiwan, then the impact will be limited. When the government's overseas missions and official documents are involved, the issue will arouse greater pressure. As a first step to name rectification, one would refer to the name Taiwan in documents, alongside the official name of the Republic of China, and use Taiwan in oral communication, instead of 'Taipei, China' or 'Chinese Taipei' as forced by Beijing.

"Taiwan has few diplomatic allies and the Taiwan government belongs to even fewer international organizations. The names Taiwan representatives use for international negotiations can hardly provide satisfactory dignity and fair treatment. The rectification campaign has justified reasons and some parts of it can be controlled by us. However, the parts that involves outside parties is controlled by others. The United States does not regard Taiwan's efforts to gain room for diplomatic maneuvers as a crucial issue, nor anything essential to Taiwan's survival. It has shown some sympathy but provided no significant assistance, and it even expressed its stance of no support. That is the real situation Taiwan's name rectification campaign is in.

"Taiwan's name rectification campaign and constitutional reforms have slow and quick paces as well as some real and unreal sides. Nonetheless, appealing to justice is not as effective as resorting to comprehensive procedures. In his second term, President Bush has moved to adjust personnel lineups in the Department of State and National Security Council. The Taiwan-U.S. relations will eventually return to the basics of stable development, mutual trust and mutual benefits. The United States stands as a buffer for Taiwan with regard to China's pressure. Taiwan now has to face pressure from Washington, a harsh and unpleasant factor that in turn allows the other side [China] who should be blamed [for causing these awkward situations] to get away. The tough challenge for the Taiwan leader is to figure out how to convince the United States to accept Taiwan's change while keeping China from resorting to war. It is not a mission impossible."

B) "It's Taiwan's Right to Chang"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" said in an editorial (12/9):

"These days, Taiwan seems unable to escape criticism. Whatever President Chen Shui-bian does, the United States accuses him of 'attempting to unilaterally change the status quo.' The referendum on arms purchases held with the March 20 presidential election was considered a violation of the status quo, and the move to rename Taiwan's overseas government agencies is also being criticized as a violation of the status quo. One cannot help but wonder if the trade pact signed by China and ASEAN states is also a violation of the status quo, since Taiwan's economic advantages are being marginalized. Both German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and French President Jacques Chirac have recently been working to lift the EU's arms embargo against China. Isn't this also a violation of the status quo? What is the US' view of China's actions?

"The terminology of contemporary politics is being defined by China alone. In applying these rules, China seems to have brought the rest of the world under its wing, with the United States following China's lead in the use of this terminology, seemingly unaware of danger. China is trying to bury Taiwan alive with the term 'status quo,' and unfortunately, the United States might be serving as Beijing's unwitting accomplice.

". After the United States turned its back on Taiwan in 1979, what point in time can be used to define the status quo? If the status quo is understood by the United States as a situation in which China deploys an estimated 600 ballistic missiles against Taiwan and upholds its 'one China' principle while gradually trying to take over the island, then what is the point of such a status quo? Why does Washington want to maintain Beijing's military threat and even rationalize it as the status quo?

"There is nothing wrong with correcting Taiwan's name, and it in no way threatens anyone or infringes upon others' rights. Many African countries cast off the yoke of colonial rule, rejected their colonial rulers' names and took new names ..

"Taiwan has shifted from the minority rule of Mainlanders during the KMT era to rule by all of the people. It's the public's right to change the country's name from one associated with a Chinese colonial regime.

The Taiwan Relations Act specifies the terms of U.S. military assistance to Taiwan, but it does not prevent China from pursuing a policy of marginalizing Taiwan out of existence in the international community. If they carry on in this fashion, even the struggle for continued existence itself is likely to be criticized by the United States as a unilateral change to the status quo."

C) "Chen Losing the Trust of a Long-time Ally"

An editorial of the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said (12/9):

". The truth is that the United States has become impatient with Chen and his administration. Chen and his men said replacing the word China with Taiwan could prevent confusion with mainland China's firms and organizations. But it does not take much wisdom and know-how to be aware that this explanation is nothing but a ruse for advancing the independence movement.

"Chen has made the latest controversial declarations at campaign forums, and those remarks, such as his proposal for a new constitution, were mainly aimed at winning over independence-minded voters, who tend to be more supportive of the more radical Taiwan Solidarity Union.

"The president is playing with fire. His reckless acts have harmed ROC-U.S. relations irrevocably. It is well-nigh impossible for Taiwan to regain steadfast support from the United States."

PAAL